

VZCZCXRO6343
OO RUEHAST RUEHBI RUEHCI RUEHLH RUEHPW
DE RUEHNE #5235 3411255
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
O 071255Z DEC 07
FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9596
INFO RUCNCLS/ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE
RUCNNSG/NUCLEAR SUPPLIERS GROUP COLLECTIVE
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RUEIDN/DNI WASHINGTON DC
RHHMUNA/HQ USPACOM HONOLULU HI
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 5759
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 7410
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC
RUMICEA/USCENTCOM INTEL CEN MACDILL AFB FL

UNCLAS NEW DELHI 005235

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [KHIV](#) [SOCI](#) [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [IN](#)

SUBJECT: INDIA LAUNCHES NOVEL HIV/AIDS AWARENESS PROGRAM

11. (U) On December 1, the GOI commemorated World AIDS day with the launch of the Red Ribbon Express, a seven-coach train designed to raise awareness of HIV/AIDS throughout India and provide education and health services, particularly in areas with low media reach. The train will travel across India and visit over 43,000 Indian villages spread over 22 states, halting at 180 stations. Congress President Sonia Gandhi, Railways Minister Lalu Prasad Yadav, Health and Family Welfare Minister Ambumani Ramadoss, and other senior GOI and international organization officials attended the event.

12. (U) The world's first AIDS awareness train is a joint initiative of GOI's National AIDS Control Organization (NACO) and the Indian Railways Ministry, supported by UNICEF. During its journey, the Red Ribbon Express will promote HIV education with a special focus on youth, women and rural populations. The train is also equipped with a mobile Counseling unit. At each stop, there will be a series of on-platform and off-site activities, including street plays and folk dance performances. Volunteers will travel to surrounding villages to provide HIV/AIDS education and promote local HIV/AIDS services. USG partners have provided HIV/AIDS materials for this initiative and will be involved in mobilizing the communities.

13. (U) Speaking at the event, Congress Party President Sonia Gandhi called India's AIDS problem "a battle that can and must be won." She highlighted the impact of the disease on India's working age population -- a group particularly vulnerable to the disease. Railway Minister Lalu Prasad Yadav pledged his support for the project and announced that the GOI would provide another train for this purpose. India's extensive railway network serves as an effective mechanism to spread the message of HIV/AIDS prevention, education and treatment in India's hinterland. In India's growing economy, an AIDS pandemic would dramatically reduce work force productivity and efficiency, as employers are forced to hire and train substitute workers.

14. (U) Comment: India is home to an estimated 2.5 million HIV-positive people, with 60 percent of them living in rural areas. The GOI's Red Ribbon Express demonstrates the GOI commitment to raising awareness of HIV/AIDS. This campaign will draw attention to HIV/AIDS beyond India's cities as well as help frame the issue in a broader socio-economic context -- an important development for India's social and economic future.

MULFORD